DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 470 606 JC 020 768

TITLE	Basic Skills: Ad Hoc Basic Skills Final Report.
INSTITUTION	Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, Sacramento.
PUB DATE	1991-00-00
NOTE	8p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.academicsenate.cc.ca.us/Publications/Papers/Basic91.htm.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Basic Skills; *College Faculty; *Community Colleges; Curriculum Development; *Program Implementation; Remedial Instruction; Teacher Attitudes; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*California Community Colleges

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of a discussion about the establishment of a basic skills discipline at the Spring 1990 Session of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. The Ad Hoc Basic Skills Committee heard arguments and concerns on both sides of the issue. Arguments for the opposition included concern about the fragmentation of curriculum, isolation of both students and faculty, lowering of standards for faculty, and the possibility that a basic skills discipline would encourage separate departments and remove basic skills courses from the math, English, and reading departments. Arguments for a basic skills discipline stem from the belief that a broader background and more knowledge of learning theory and methodology best serves pre-collegiate students. In making their decision, the Basic Skills Committee could not ignore the overwhelming opposition to a basic skills discipline expressed in the testimony. Therefore, the committee recommended that no basic skills discipline be established at that time. However, the committee also recognized the need for faculty to refine their methodology to meet the challenges of the growing numbers of basic skills students in California, and provided several recommendations to address the problems created by not having a basic skills discipline. (NB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 470 606

Basic Skills: Ad Hoc Basic Skills Final Report

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

Spring 1991

MEMBERS OF THE AD HOC BASIC SKILLS COMMITTEE
1990-91

Irene Menegas, Chair, Diablo Valley College
Margaret Brown, Butte College
Denny Burzynski, West Valley College
Tom Dayton, American River College
Karen Dennis, CATESOL Representative, Rancho Santiago College
Phil Feldman, Bakersfield College
Andres Gonzales, CATESOL Representative, College of San Mateo
Cheryl Hanson, Santa Rosa Junior College
Baji Majette-Daniels, Contra Costa College
Leslyn Polk, North Orange CCD Adult Ed Division
Lois Powers, ECCTYC Representative, Fullerton College
Kathy Warriner, Chancellor's Office
Evelyn "Sam" Weiss, Executive Committee Member, Golden West College

897020 NE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. M. Silverman

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

OVERVIEW

In response to considerable discussion about the establishment of a basic skills discipline and resolutions (numbers 9.8S90 and 9.9S90) at the Spring 1990 Session of the Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges, the Ad Hoc Basic Skills Committee which was to include credit and non-credit instructors in basic skills was established in spring 1990 for the purpose of studying the issue of whether to create a pre-collegiate basic skills discipline. As directed by the resolutions, the committee held five hearings to listen to arguments by faculty across the state about whether or not a basic skills discipline should be established. The committee was directed to forward recommendations regarding the discipline issue to the Standards and Practices Committee for consideration. The committee's final report will be submitted to the Executive Committee before distribution to local senates.

Testimony was received from over 50 interested faculty and administrators at hearings attended by over 125 people at Butte College, San Francisco, San Diego, Fresno City College, and Riverside City College. The committee and the Academic Senate have received about 100 letters on the issue.

It is clear that the issue of establishing a separate basic skills discipline is both complex and controversial revealing strong feelings and deep commitments. The overwhelming majority of the testimony presented opposed the establishment of a basic skills discipline. Major opposition has been expressed by discipline-related organizations including: ECCTYC (English), CMCCC (math), CRLA and NCCRA (reading), and CATESOL (ESL).

Opposition to the establishment of a discipline stems primarily from the belief of faculty that MA level expertise in the separate disciplines is necessary and that a knowledge of the full scope of curriculum within each discipline serves students best. Faculty were concerned about fragmentation of curriculum, isolation of both faculty and students, lowering of standards for faculty, thus creating a two-tiered system, and the possibility that a discipline in basic skills would encourage separate departments where none existed and thus remove basic skills courses from the math, English, and reading departments.

Support for the establishment of a discipline stems from the belief of some faculty that a broader background and more knowledge of learning theory and methodology serves pre-collegiate students best. Those advocating a basic skills discipline argue that special training and/or experience is necessary to teach these students, training that is generally not included in a discipline-based master's degree program. Concern was expressed especially by those from small or rural colleges and/or colleges with special programs that they would be unable to hire new faculty for their programs. Individual faculty were also concerned that their qualifications no longer fit into any existing discipline.

The committee heard arguments and concerns on both sides of the issue; however, it cannot ignore the overwhelming opposition to a basic skills discipline expressed in the testimony. **Therefore, the committee recommends that no basic skills discipline be established at this**

time. The committee does acknowledge, however, that the constraints placed on colleges, programs, and instructors by such a decision deserve attention. The committee also recognizes the need for faculty to refine their methodology to meet the challenges of the growing numbers of basic skills students in California.

By the year 2005, it is anticipated that the California Community Colleges will hire 18,000 new instructors. With approximately 60% of our students requiring basic skills instruction at the present time and with the expected increasing enrollment, it is imperative that educational programs be developed to meet the growing basic skill needs of California's diverse student population.

Therefore, the committee has included as part of the document, along with the recommendation that no discipline be established, suggestions to address some of the problems encountered by not having a discipline and strategies to strengthen basic skills programs and instructional methodologies.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Overwhelming testimony by many educators, some who presented individual points of view and some who represented entire departments and colleges, indicated that the clear preference is for basic skills to be taught by instructors trained in the specific disciplines--math, English and reading--and, therefore not to recommend a separate discipline for basic skills at this time.

The discussion surrounding the establishment of a basic skills discipline has focused on (1) academic qualifications and standards, (2) curricular issues, (3) the structure and status of programs within the colleges, and finally, (4) staffing and other administrative concerns.

Academic Qualifications

All faculty agree that basic skills students deserve quality instruction. Those opposing a discipline argue that an in-depth and sophisticated understanding of the discipline is necessary for effective teaching and that faculty without this background would not have sufficient expertise in a given field to meet the needs of adult learners who need to understand underlying principles. They also expressed concern that anything less than a master's in the teaching discipline (or related discipline included in the List of Disciplines adopted by the Board of Governors, July 1989) would not provide significant rigor in a discipline. Though they recognize the need for special training in order to teach basic skills students well, faculty opposing a discipline believe that the necessary training can be developed more easily by an instructor in a discipline area than the expertise in the fields of math, English or reading can be developed by a basic skills instructor.

Proponents of a discipline felt that the existing minimum qualifications for each discipline are too narrow and do not recognize specialized training in the related fields of learning theory, counseling, cross-cultural training, etc. which prepare instructors to meet the needs of basic skills students. Faculty with advanced preparation in individual disciplines only, discipline

proponents argued, may not be the most interested and appropriate faculty to work with these students.

Also at issue is maintaining currency in one's discipline. Opponents of a discipline also argue that basic skills instructors may not be able to keep current in several disciplines, especially if they do not have an adequate background in the field. The majority of supporters of the discipline advocated a separation of the proposed discipline into two parts: language arts and math. Faculty with a concentration in language arts or math, they felt, would certainly be able to keep current in the discipline through professional publications and through professional development activities provided by discipline organizations.

Curricular Issues

Curriculum is another important concern for faculty. Those opposing a discipline argue that to be able to teach well, one must know the content of and be able to teach the full range of courses within a discipline. Also because faculty are responsible for not only teaching but developing curriculum, it is essential that they understand the whole curriculum to build strong programs. Further concerns were the possible fragmentation of curriculum and the problems of identifying exit levels to transfer programs if faculty taught only the lowest levels. Some faculty are concerned that students get trapped in basic skills programs.

Basic skills faculty are also concerned about the basic skills curriculum. They feel it receives inadequate attention at some colleges in favor of transfer level courses, and they view themselves as better qualified to develop basic skills programs than faculty with less training and experience in this area. Furthermore, some departments do not require or urge faculty to teach the full range of the curriculum within their discipline and are not concerned about hiring faculty who can do so. Yet, the existing minimum qualifications prevent competent basic skills faculty who lack a basic education credential from teaching basic skills courses. Rather than trying to trap students in remedial programs, proponents of a discipline view basic skills courses as serving the general curriculum by preparing students for higher level courses.

Structure and Status of Programs

Though establishing a basic skills discipline does not mean creating a separate department, concern was expressed that some college administrators and some basic skills instructors would attempt to establish separate departments for basic skills, thus removing the remedial courses from the departments. Some instructors who teach basic skills courses indicated that they preferred to be a part of academic departments. Instructors both in and out of academic departments who have taken ownership of basic skills courses feel they are teaching them well and do not wish to lose them.

Opponents to a discipline express concern that if special programs were established, basic skills faculty and students would be separated from vocational/transfer students and faculty. In some colleges basic skills students and faculty are perceived as second class and are not considered part of the college community; in such cases, basic skills students are isolated and tend to

develop negative perceptions about themselves and their college experience. Their progress to college level courses can be impeded. Even though such perceptions may be unwarranted, the result could well be less college support in terms of space, staffing and funding.

Proponents of a discipline believe that creating a discipline would build credibility and raise the status of basic skills faculty. It would also enhance the statewide sharing of effective basic skills program models and teaching strategies. How basic skills students are perceived depends more on faculty attitudes than on college structures, they believe. Many colleges with separate basic skills departments are successfully moving students into and through college-level coursework.

Staffing and Other Administrative Concerns

The problems of staffing are a serious concern of many colleges. However, difficulty in staffing should not result in lower standards; yet in times of staffing crunches the pressure may be to lower standards which often result in limited preparation in discipline areas. Lowering standards cannot be the solution to staffing problems in any areas.

Those opposing a discipline fear that a basic skills discipline would not be sufficiently demanding and would allow for abuses in hiring. Nonetheless, they do recognize that hiring practices need to change (if they aren't already at many colleges) so that instructors are prepared, willing to teach, and interested in teaching basic skills students, and that hiring practices and selection criteria reflect both that expertise and those attitudes so that the needs of the current community college population can be addressed. Diversity is also important in hiring selections because the basic skills student population is itself diverse. Again developing creative ways to encourage minorities to go into the teaching field is essential.

The elimination of the Basic Education Credential and the lack of a basic skills discipline may contribute to staffing shortages at a time of great need. Faculty who hold grandparented credentials may continue to be employed under the terms of their credentials. The problem is with faculty who would have qualified for the old Basic Education credential but do not meet the new minimum qualifications. Proponents of a discipline believe such faculty continue to be competent to teach basic skills courses but are prevented from doing so because they do not meet the new minimum qualifications.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Creative strategies need to be developed to meet the staffing and training needs of pre-collegiate programs, particularly to address the problems created by not having a basic skills discipline. The committee's examination of the issues leads to the following recommendations:

- Increase the number of faculty who are appropriately trained to teach pre-collegiate adult students.

- Encourage mid-career retraining leaves at full pay to help facilitate training for instructors

who wish to work with pre-collegiate students.

! Encourage the University of California and the California State University system to create programs and/or revise programs to meet the needs of future community college instructors who will be teaching pre-collegiate students.

! Encourage the Academic Senate to include the issue of basic skills education on its agenda.

! Encourage the Academic Senate to promote the expansion and funding of additional full-time positions in reading, English, math, and ESL to meet the diverse needs of community college students.

! Encourage recruiting and mentoring programs that help college students seek careers in community college teaching; e.g. the Teachers of Tomorrow Program at American River College.

! Encourage discipline organizations to explore avenues for generating and attracting instructors and expanding internship opportunities.

! Encourage special funding to assist instructors in gaining the appropriate degrees to meet minimum qualifications.

! Encourage the establishment of a system wide job bank for instructors in Reading, English, ESL, and Math.

! Explore ways to make it financially feasible for faculty to transfer to colleges/districts across the state; e.g. year for year credit for experience on the salary schedule.

! Encourage special funding for incentives to instructors who teach in geographically sparse areas.

X Where appropriate, list certain study or learning skills courses under the education discipline to enable colleges to hire faculty with a master's in education.

CONCLUSION

Although the committee did not recommend the establishment of a separate discipline at this time, the committee would like to encourage all faculty to become aware of and take responsibility for the special needs of pre-collegiate learners. The committee identified the

following areas of knowledge and skills that instructors need in addition to the content of precollege curriculum to contribute to the success of basic skills learners:

- ! cognitive theory
- ! learning problems
- ! motivational techniques
- ! learning styles
- ! adult learning pedagogy
- ! response modalities
- ! cross cultural values
- ! varied delivery systems
- ! task analysis
- ! study skills
- ! counseling strategies
- ! knowledge of assessment instruments
- ! student & program evaluation techniques

Some ways in which faculty can become better aware of the needs of pre-collegiate students would be through wide dissemination and discussion of this report as well as through presentations and publications by professional organizations. More specifically, some of the ways in which faculty can take responsibility for addressing these needs are through the following:

- ! serious in-service workshops to enhance sensitivity to the special needs of pre-collegiate students and to assist in developing appropriate methodologies
- ! special coursework in learning and cognitive theory
- ! increased awareness of current research in subject fields
- ! scholarly journals and other publications by professional organizations
- ! regional, state and national conferences
- X on-going discussions at department meetings
- ! exchange of ideas in newsletters
- ! on-going evaluation of Basic Skills Curriculum and articulation of basic skills courses throughout the system
- ! increased attention to curriculum
- ! development and publication of exemplary basic skills program profiles
- ! development of hiring qualifications and selection criteria which reflect needs of current community college populations

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[X] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[ ] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").